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Measuring The Creative Class:

Highlights from *The Creative Class: A Key to Rural Growth* by David A. McGranahan and Timothy R. Wojan of the USDA, Economic Research Service

The Creative Class Theory

- Richard Florida argues that the knowledge and ideas requisite for economic growth are embodied in occupations involving high levels of creativity. These occupations constitute the “creative class” and are critical in today’s economy.
- The creative class is very mobile and drawn to cities with cultural diversity, active street scenes, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Refining The Creative Class Theory

- USDA economists used “O*NET,” a Bureau of Labor Statistics data set on skills generally used in the workplace, to identify jobs in Florida’s list that typically involve “thinking creatively.”
- They screened out occupations requiring high levels of creativity (such as schoolteachers, judges, and medical doctors) but whose numbers are proportional to the residential population served.

Management occupations:	
Top executives	11-1000
Advertising, marketing, promotions, public relations, and sales managers	11-2000
Financial managers	11-3030
Operations specialties managers, except financial managers	11-3010, 11-3020, 11-3040 through 11-3070
Other management occupations, except farmers and farm managers	11-9020 through 11-9190
Business and financial operations occupations:	
Business operations specialists	13-1000
Other financial specialists	13-2020 through 13-2090
Computer and mathematical occupations:	
Computer specialists	15-1000
Mathematical science occupations	15-2000
Architecture and engineering occupations:	
Architects, surveyors, and cartographers	17-1000
Engineers	17-2000
Drafters, engineering, and mapping technicians	17-3000
Life, physical, and social science occupations:	
Life and physical scientists	19-1000 and 19-2000
Social scientists and related workers	19-3000
Education, training, and library occupations:	
Postsecondary teachers	25-1000
Librarians, curators, and archivists	25-4000
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations:	
Art and design workers*	27-1000*
Entertainers and performers, sports, and related workers*	27-2000*
Media and communications workers	27-3000 and 27-4000
Sales and related occupations:	
Sales representatives, services, wholesale and manufacturing	41-3000 and 41-4000
Other sales and related occupations, including supervisors	41-1000 and 41-9000
*These two categories comprise the arts occupation subset	

Where Is the Creative Class?

- The creative class is predominately urban. In both 1990 and 2000 two-thirds of the “creative-class counties” were metropolitan.
- “Creative-class counties” are those ranking in the top quarter in the proportion of residents employed in creative-class occupations.
- About 260 (11 percent) of non-metro counties ranked as creative-class counties.

Where Is the Creative Class?

- Counties high in natural amenities are most likely to be creative-class magnets. Pitkin County, Colorado (which contains Aspen) had the largest creative-class proportion of all non-metro counties in both 1990 and 2000.
- Counties dominated by colleges and universities also ranked high in creative-class proportions.

Conclusions

- The creative class was highly associated with growth in rural areas from 1990 to 2004. Other non-metro counties grew relatively slowly in the 1990s, but creative-class non-metro counties gained jobs over the period at a faster rate than their metro counterparts.
- Despite an urban affinity, the creative class can be drawn out of cities to high-amenity rural locations. Their activities, in turn, appear to generate new jobs and local growth.



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